

# The Florida Bluebird



Volume 4, Issue 1

February 2014

## West- Central Area Meeting Great Success!



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On February 1, 2014 we held an area meeting for members in Region 4 of the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS). The meeting was organized by FBS Board members Cheri Martin-Spray and Louis Nipper and held at the Beverly Hills branch of the Citrus County Public Library. The meeting was announced to members in the last issue of our newsletter and via e-mailed invitations. The meeting was open to the public and a local newspaper printed an article about the meeting

Mr. Nipper, generously offered to give one of his durable, well-constructed nest boxes to all existing and new members who attended the meeting. When the doors of the library were opened, there was a line of people extending across the parking lot. It took thirty minutes to get everyone signed in. Even with every chair they could find in the library, it was literally standing-room only. There were at least 85 people in attendance.

To educate the group on bluebirds, Faith Jones presented the FBS *May All Your Blues be Birds* powerpoint program.

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# WELCOME to the nest!

## New Members

Chet Bennett	Hernando
Floyd Blodgett	Lacanto
Al Cairns	Hernando
Lynn Coughlin	Homosassa
Marlene Dicker	Beverly Hills
Roger Frick	Homosassa
Paulette Froehlich	Citrus Springs
Ernest Gomez	Beverly Hills
Sandra Gomez	Beverly Hills
Judy Greer	Hernando
Rebecca Hainlen	The Villages
Hannelore Hartman	Hernando
Ruth Hawn	Homosassa
Jerry, Yvonne & Lisa Ison	Inverness
Freda Kaiser	Hernando
Henry Koelblinger	Hernando
Mike Kulka	Crystal River
Christine Pope	Homosassa
Alexis Ralph	Hernando
Johnie Richie	Inverness
Florence Richey	Inverness
Bonnie Schirmers	Beverly Hills
Nancy Smith	Homosassa
Convy Stahl	Hernando
Nancy Stokes	Fleming Island
Sandy Teubel	Hernando
Les Tovig	Homosassa
Helen Van de Walker	Beverly Hills
Jerome Waite	Hernando



The group was very attentive, and had many questions. A very informative Q & A session followed the formal presentation. We had planned a guided trip to see part of the bluebird trail along the Withlacoochee State Trail, but our guide for the trip became ill that day, and was unable to lead the group.

The meeting generated 27 new memberships. Mr. Nipper donated over forty nest boxes for this event.



Area Meeting 2/1/2014



Barnie Barnhart explains to attendees some the features of Louis Nipper's nest boxes, and how to install them.



## New Bluebird Trail by Homosassa River Garden Club

Ruth Hawn, Nancy Smith and Sandy Teubel represented the Homosassa River Garden Club at the FBS Region 4/ West-Central Area Meeting on February 1, 2014 in Beverly Hills. The club had been working on a project to establish a bluebird trail at the Stage Stand Cemetery in Homosassa. Timing of our meeting was perfect. At the meeting they learned as much as they could about bluebirds and nest monitoring.

They obtained boxes provided by Louis Nipper, and used the installation guidelines provided at the meeting to choose locations. As recommended, they installed the boxes at least 100 yards apart in the cemetery. They are now anxiously waiting to see who might take up residence in their boxes.

## FBS Principles and Nest Box Monitoring Protocol

As we embark on a new nesting season, we would ask that all our members please review and adhere to the FBS Principles and Nest Box Protocol. A copy can be found under the General Information tab on our website, [floridabluebirdsociety.com](http://floridabluebirdsociety.com).

The Cornell NestWatch Code of Conduct is also a good source of information on proper behavior around nesting birds.

We know you want to do everything possible to ensure healthy birds and nesting success, so please read this information.

## Unexpected Visitors at Feeders this Winter

One of the topics discussed at the Region 3/North East meeting on February 22 was bluebirds at feeders. We know approximately 70% of Eastern bluebird's diet is made up of insects and other invertebrates. But what do they eat in the winter when bugs are not so plentiful? Similar to their "cousins", American robins, bluebirds are known to eat berries in the winter. But, and many of our members know, especially in winter, bluebirds eat other things including bird seed. Below is a photo by Yvette Cuny of bluebirds taking seed from her feeder.



Dennis Colton, a member who winters in Zephyrhills, was surprised to see bluebirds frequenting his seed feeders and eating seed on the ground. He was able to video the activity on a number of days in January. A close review of the footage revealed a bluebird with a peanut in its mouth.



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When Mr. Colton contacted Cornell Lab of Ornithology questioning bluebirds eating seed, the response he received indicated that this was new to them. The Public Information Specialist that responded indicated he would forward the information to the editors of *Birds of North America* in case they might be interested in updating their account of Eastern bluebirds Food Habits too reflect the potential of seed-taking at feeders. As we all know, a primary motivation for the founding of FBS was to determine what is really happening with bluebirds in Florida. So much of the “known” information about bluebirds just does not seem to be true in Florida.



*Yellow-throated warbler and Eastern bluebird at feeder on Fleming Island.*  
*Photo by nancy Stokes*

Prior to seeing Mr. Colton’s videos I was aware of Eastern bluebirds taking advantage of feeders. I am also knew of instances when other primarily bug-eating birds enjoyed a meal at a feeder. I have personally seen or seen photos of Carolina wrens, yellow-throated warblers , and juvenile palm warblers taking seed from Florida feeders.

What I found most interesting in Mr. Colton’s video, was a yellow-rumped warbler eating seed from the ground and the feeder! That was a new one for me. I had never heard of a yellow-rumped warbler at a feeder. I mentioned this during our discussion at the February 22 Area meeting. Nancy Stokes, from Fleming Island mentioned that she had warblers coming to her feeder along



*Pine warbler and Eastern bluebirds at feeder on Fleming Island.*  
*Photo by Nancy Stokes*

with bluebirds. Her photographs confirm yellow-rumped warblers will eat at feeders.

Most of the feeders that are attracting these birds contain a seed mix that includes nuts. Ce Worley, who has had bluebirds at her feeder for a number of years feeds a berry and nut mix.



*Yellow-rumped warbler, Carolina chickadee (expected at feeders),and Eastern bluebird. Fleming Island*  
*Photo by Nancy Stokes*

Why are these birds with beaks adapted to eating insects frequenting so many feeders this winter? Is there a shortage of bugs and other invertebrates due to weather conditions or pesticide use? Are there different ingredients in bird seed mixes that are appealing? Or, is it just a really easy meal? These are all questions that deserve further investigation

If you have photos of Eastern bluebirds, or other birds not normally considered feeder birds, please send them to [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com). Please include the date the photo was taken and what type of feed was in the feeder or on the ground.  
*Faith Jones*

## Early Nesting Reported at Region 3 / Northeast Area Meeting

The Region 3 / Northeast Area meeting was held on February 22, 2014 in Orange Park. It provided an



opportunity to talk about bluebirds and for those in attendance to learn from each other. Bill showed pictures sent to him by Judy Hensley from St. Augustine. She has evidence of an attempted bluebird nesting in mid-January. To our knowledge, this is the earliest known nesting activity.

*Photo taken by Judith Hensley January 9, 2014*

During the meeting we discussed bluebirds at feeders and nest monitoring protocol. The highlight of the meeting was the showing of a beautifully orchestrated presentation by Glenda Simmons featuring some of her breath-taking images of bluebirds.

## Spring Blitz April 4 & 5

### How to participate

Simply choose a location, count the number of bluebirds you see, and send us a report of your sightings. Here are two ways to submit results.

1. Enter your data on a spreadsheet or form you can download from our web site or it will be emailed to you prior to the Blitz. Complete email it to [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com) or mail it to: Faith Jones, FBS Statewide Bluebird Blitz Chair, 763 Mallard Drive, Sanford Fl 32771.
2. Enter you sightings at [ebird.org](http://ebird.org). If you are a Cornell NestWatch participant, you will use the same login and password to access ebird.

## Where the Florida Bluebird Society is Today?

This could be called a year of transition for the Florida Bluebird Society (FBS). This also could be a very crucial year for the FBS.

When the FBS was created in 2009 we were fortunate to have a Board of Directors composed of dedicated, hard-working individuals who were willing to give of their time and share their expertise in helping the FBS take wing.

I think it could be said that it took the FBS 5 years to fledge. But now the FBS finds itself in that crucial time between leaving the nest and being able to survive on its own.

The reason for this is that after five years many of the original board members have felt it was time for new blood, new faces, new ideas to help shape the future of the FBS. And so one-by-one some of the original board members have moved on. They include people like Barbie Arms, who really dedicated herself to getting the FBS started; Katie Sieving, who provided technical assistance, and Elena Sachs, who served as a liaison between the FBS and the Florida Wildlife Commission, and who also provided a lot of thoughtful input during our discussions.

And finally, this will be my last year as president. Without the folks I just mention -- and without folks like you who were willing to provide the support for this new group -- there never would have been a FBS. But at this point in my life I feel that it is absolutely necessary that the FBS have a younger, more vigorous individual to be able to bring fresh energy and provide new ideas.

We are very fortunate to have added Louis Nipper and Cheri Martin-Spray to our Board of Directors, and have benefited from their knowledge and energy.

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Where the FBS is Today ?

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The FBS also is very fortunate that Faith Jones, who was actually the first person to help launch the FBS, will continue as treasurer. Anything I've said about anyone else, I must add in spades for Faith. When the FBS was just an idea, she reached into her pocket and helped provide the finances so necessary to get to create the website and get the proper government approval to form a non-profit organization. And as treasurer, she not only keeps track of our finances, but manages the membership roster and continues to insure that we keep abreast of all the required registrations. So, whoever is elected president during the FBS annual meeting in August will have an incredibly knowledgeable and dependable person to assist them in guiding the FBS in the years ahead.

But there is another area in which the FBS has a dire need. That is someone to edit the newsletter, which was to be issued every other month. Barbie Arms did that for us in the beginning. When she left I did a few issues, but have not been able to keep to that schedule. It is critical that we have a newsletter to not only keep our members informed, but also to serve as a form where members can share their photos, ask questions, and tell about their bluebird experiences.

The bottom line is, FBS is in dire need of a **Newsletter Editor**, and someone who is willing to take on the duties of **President**. If you might be interested or would like more information about the positions, please contact me at [ablebillsbluebirds@yahoo.com](mailto:ablebillsbluebirds@yahoo.com) or [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com).

*Bill Pennewill*



## T-shirts Available \$10.00 plus shipping

FBS has t-shirts available in two styles. They are available with our logo, designed by Ce Worley, or with Glenda Simmon's bluebird photo.

The men's style shirts are white, preshrunk cotton. They are available in sizes medium, large, or extra-large. The shirts seem to run a little small, so if there is any doubt you may want to go with a larger size.

Shirts can be obtained by sending a request to [floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com](mailto:floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com). They can be paid for by check or via PayPal.



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